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Jeff,

I don't know the detailed outcome of this process, but the article below describes a joint land management agreement between BC and the Tlingit First Nation on the Taku River. I recall that when the Tulsequa Chief Mine was being considered for reopening the Tlingit First Nation raised concerns about their lands. This seems to be the outcome. The general result, a joint land management agreement between the native people and the regional (territory/state) government, might be a good example of what the Bristol Bay tribes can aspire to.

Phil



WEEKLY ONLINE NEWS STORY

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BC, Tlingit pact resolves land use in Taku River area

British Columbia Premier Christy Clark and Taku River Tlingit First Nation spokesperson John Ward July 19 signed a land and resource management and shared decision-making agreement, a pact that creates 13 new protected areas in the Atlin Taku region of northwestern B.C., while providing resource development opportunities and investment certainty in more than 3 million hectares (about 11,500 square miles).

“This balanced approach means a brighter future for families in the Northwest and opens the territory for business, bringing new jobs and opportunities, while protecting key environmental and cultural values,” Clark said.

The agreement, developed collaboratively by the Taku River Tlingit First Nation and the provincial government, is the first of its kind in British Columbia. It gives formal effect to the Atlin Taku Land Use Plan and establishes government-to-government decision-making structures and processes, to guide future land and resource management, engaging the community of Atlin and a cross-section of environmental and industry stakeholders.

“The Taku River Tlingits have looked forward to this day for a very long time,” said Ward. “I wish to congratulate and thank the members of my First Nation for their hard work and dedication in bringing our ‘Tlatsini Vision’ to life in government-to-government agreements, which will protect our lands and Tlingit Khustiyxh, our way of life, and help make our dreams of a prosperous and sustainable future a reality.”

From 2000 to 2004, the Taku River Tlingit and B.C. were involved in litigation at the Supreme Court of Canada.

“This agreement represents a clear shift from conflict to collaboration between B.C. and the Taku River Tlingit First Nation,” said Clark.

The resulting land-use plan resolves long-standing access, protection, and mineral development issues in the Taku watershed, and provides clarity with respect to the values and objectives to be considered in resource management decision-making.

Some 26.2 percent of the land-use-plan area considered of exceptional conservation value and strong Aboriginal and community interest are recommended for protection. This includes the mainstream of the Taku River and a significant proportion of its major tributaries, the Nakina, Inklin, and Sheslay.

The British Columbia government said prohibiting commercial forestry in a large proportion of the plan area conserves critical caribou habitat. Salmon habitat conservation measures in the Taku watershed support its continued role as a salmon stronghold for both the western Canadian province and Alaska.

While setting aside areas for conservation, the land-use-plan leaves some 90 percent of the areas of highest mineral potential available for exploration and potential development.

The Taku River Tlingit have already begun to work co-operatively with mining developers in the area on potential resource development projects. It's expected that future resource extraction projects could support 350 jobs during construction and 280 operations

jobs.

“After three years of negotiations, the Taku River Tlingit and B.C. have achieved agreements that send a clear signal internationally that this is a place where government and First Nations can work together co-operatively, with respect, in consultation with local stakeholder groups,” said Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Mary Polak. “While the most sensitive areas critical to the Taku River Tlingit culture have been protected, a significant portion of the planning area is open for potential resource development. The certainty achieved through this land-use-plan will establish an improved investment climate considerate of Taku River Tlingit cultural values.”

Commenting on the historic and unique agreement, the Association for Mineral Exploration British Columbia thanked the Province of British Columbia and the Taku River Tlingit First Nation for engaging the mineral exploration and development sector in the development of the Atlin Taku Land Use Plan. “While we have some key outstanding concerns, the planning process has helped build stronger relationships between the sector, the Taku River Tlingit and the Atlin community,” said AME BC President & CEO Gavin C. Dirom July 19. “Based on these much improved relationships, AME BC is hopeful that the implementation of the land-use plan will result in successful mineral resource development in the area. Having greater certainty of mineral tenure, and ensuring as many options are available to access the tenures, are absolutely critical issues to mineral explorers, developers and investors,” he added.

“While AME BC recognizes that 90 percent of high-value mineral areas are open to exploration, AME BC Chairwoman Mona Forster said July 19 said the organization remains concerned that the designation of more than 26 percent of the total land area in protected areas and more than 15 percent in area-specific resource management zones is excessively high when compared to other land-use plans in British Columbia and represents a potentially significant lost opportunity to all citizens.

“It is not yet clear that access is definitely permitted through some newly designated areas, nonetheless, we are optimistic that the mineral exploration and development sector will be able to work with the Taku River Tlingit and the community of Atlin to ensure that exploration and development projects move forward in a positive way and will bring long-term economic opportunities and benefits to the local region and to all British Columbians,” Forster added.

The region left open to mineral development includes the Tulsequah Chief mine site, a precious metals-rich volcanic massive sulfide deposit on British Columbia’s western border, about 40 miles, or 64 kilometers, northeast of Juneau, Alaska.

Chieftain Metals Inc., a junior mining company that recently took ownership of Tulsequah, said its first priority at the project is to install a plant to treat the acidic metal-laden water flowing from historic copper-gold-silver-zinc-lead mines on the property, which have been sitting idle since it was shut down in 1957.

The acid rock drainage, which is believed to be reaching a tributary of the Taku River, has been a concern for regulators in both Alaska and British Columbia.

Environment Canada is requiring the installation of the water treatment plant as part of the conditions of Chieftain taking ownership of the property.

The other big hurdle for Chieftain is transportation to the project. The company is currently considering a year-round by road from Atlin, a route that the Taku River Tlingit First Nations previously opposed.

The Taku River Tlingit's and Chieftain are in discussions to come to agreement on access.

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